



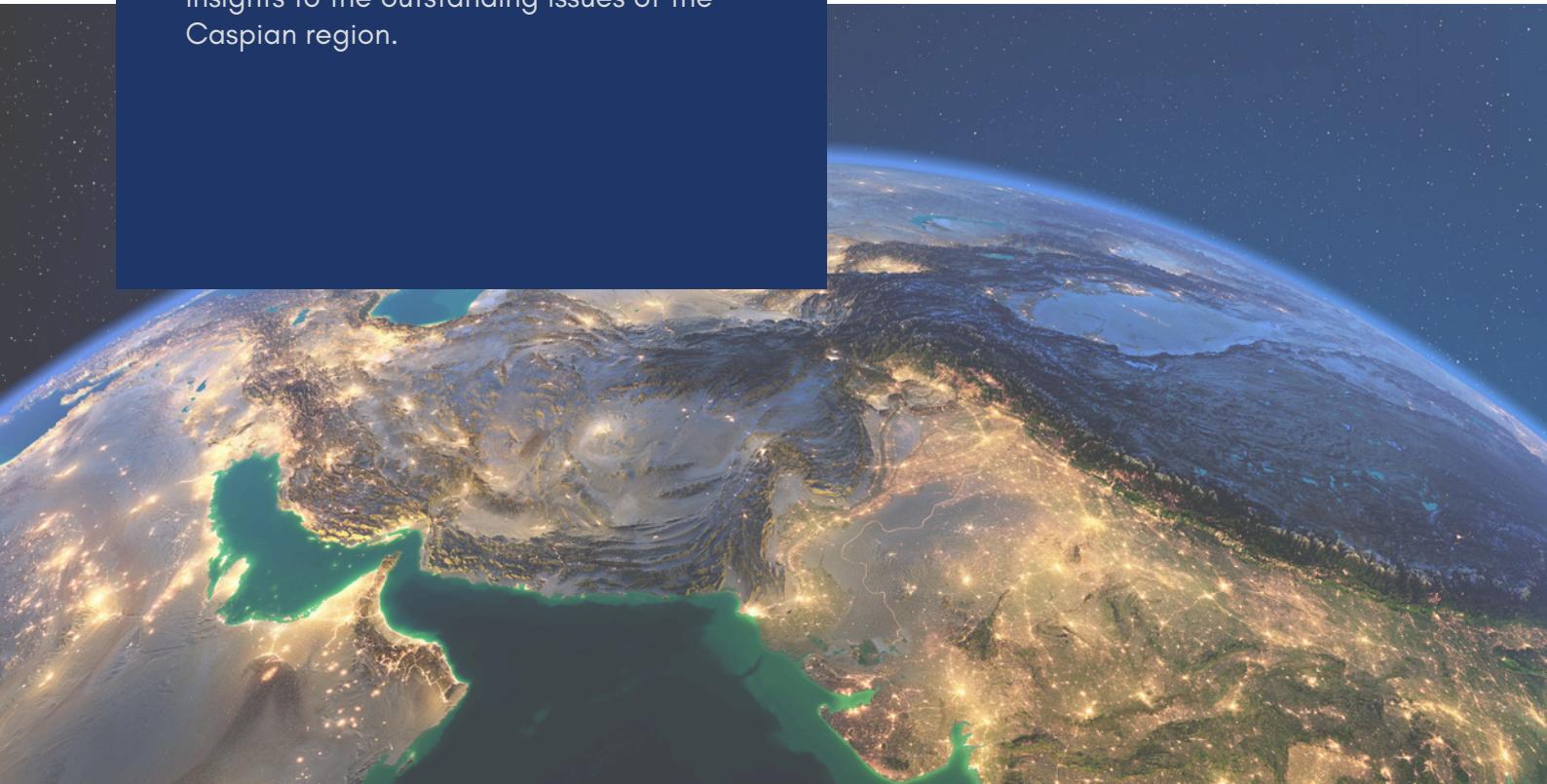
2025 Caspian Policy Center Year in Review



ABOUT US

The Caspian Policy Center (CPC) is an independent, nonprofit research think tank based in Washington D.C. Economic, political, energy, and security issues of the Caspian region constitute the central research focus of the Center.

CPC aims at becoming a premier research and debate platform in the Caspian region with relevant publications, events, projects, and media productions to nurture a comprehensive understanding of the intertwined affairs of the Caspian region. With an inclusive, scholarly, and innovative approach, the Caspian Policy Center presents a platform where diverse voices from academia, business, and policy world from both the region and the nation's capital interact to produce distinct ideas and insights to the outstanding issues of the Caspian region.



Message from CPC President Efgan Nifti

The Caspian region is in a period of monumental change. From the build out of Trans-Caspian connectivity, growing economies, and environmental issues, to geopolitical shifts enveloping the Caucasus, this region is moving in ways that would have been difficult to imagine a decade ago.



This has made the work of the Caspian Policy Center, now entering its 10th year, all the more crucial. This document, which encapsulates the myriad of events and trips abroad conducted by CPC in 2025, demonstrates how these shifts in the region have translated into one of our most productive years to date.

In 2025, we hosted four major conferences spread out across Washington D.C., New York, and London, held many smaller events in Washington. Numerous times CPC brought together leaders from government, business world, and the non-governmental sector who are shaping the region. Our team made numerous trips this year to destinations across Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where we gained first hand knowledge from policy makers and private sector stakeholders.

The end result of this work has been events and publications that reflect the dramatic moment for the Caspian region. In 2025, our team released major publications on topics such as water and energy security, critical minerals, the Middle Corridor, and more.

CPC's degree of focus on and depth of understanding of this region remains unmatched. We look forward to 2026 and the future work of providing our audience with high quality detailed reporting and analysis.

Efgan Nifti



Month by Month Summary

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January



A U.S. Strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus: New Policy for Trump

New strategy proposals for the incoming U.S. administration to successfully work with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus were discussed at a January 15, Caspian Policy Center (CPC) event. The CPC event presented a new policy paper, "A Trans-Caspian Trajectory: A New U.S. Strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus," written by Senior CPC Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, followed by discussion moderated by CPC Board Chairman, **Amb. (ret.) Richard Hoagland** with Senior Center for Strategic and International Studies Vice President **Daniel Runde** and Senior Hudson Institute Fellow **Luke Coffey**. The participants discussed recent developments in the Caspian region, potential challenges and opportunities for enhancing cooperation, and the regional implications of increased United States engagement. Discussions explored policy recommendations for the incoming U.S. administration, bringing together diplomats, experts, and specialists, as well as government policymakers.

Read the full press release [here](#).

Discussion with Ambassador (ret.) Matthew Klimow, Former Ambassador of the United States to Turkmenistan and CPC Board Member



"I saw tremendous changes during my time in Turkmenistan in every sphere, whether that's political, trade, in business, or even in human rights," said former U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan **Matthew Klimow**, during a discussion at the Caspian Policy Center on January 29. Klimow discussed political and economic developments in Turkmenistan and the Caspian region, offering insights into how Turkmenistan is perceived internationally while also examining the perspectives and policies of the Turkmen government on a range of key issues. Following the welcome remarks by CPC President **Efgan Nifti**, Chairman of the CPC Board **Ambassador (ret.) Richard Hoagland** introduced Klimow, and then CPC Senior Fellow **Eric Rudenshield** moderated the discussion.



"My biggest challenge as ambassador was trying to paint an accurate picture of Turkmenistan for officials in Washington, or really for anybody. Turkmenistan in Washington circles suffers, even today, from years and years of negative reporting. That negative reporting, I think, obfuscated and overshadowed the progress that Turkmenistan has made over the [five] years I spent there," said Klimow. He also discussed Turkmenistan's long-standing policy of "positive neutrality," highlighting its role in shaping the country's foreign relations, and noted how this policy has influenced Turkmenistan's diplomatic approach, allowing it to maintain balanced and independent relationships with other nations while avoiding entanglement in regional and global conflicts."



Klimow also gave his views on energy dynamics in the region, especially vis-a-vis Turkmenistan. According to him, Russia's proposal to form a so-called gas union with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by reversing the pipeline flow that once transported Turkmen gas to its Central Asian neighbors caused political friction between Russia and Turkmenistan. "While the relationship with Uzbekistan remains solid, Ashgabat's relationship with Moscow really took a hit because of this. A 'regional gas union' proposed by Moscow is a no-go for Ashgabat," he stressed.

Ambassador Klimow addressed a wide range of issues while speaking to the large in-person audience, including Turkmenistan's regional relations, efforts to mitigate water and other environmental issues, counter-terrorism efforts, as well as its relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Lastly, Ambassador Klimow gave his views on what the priorities should be for the new U.S. administration regarding its bilateral relations with Turkmenistan.

Read the full press release [here](#)

February

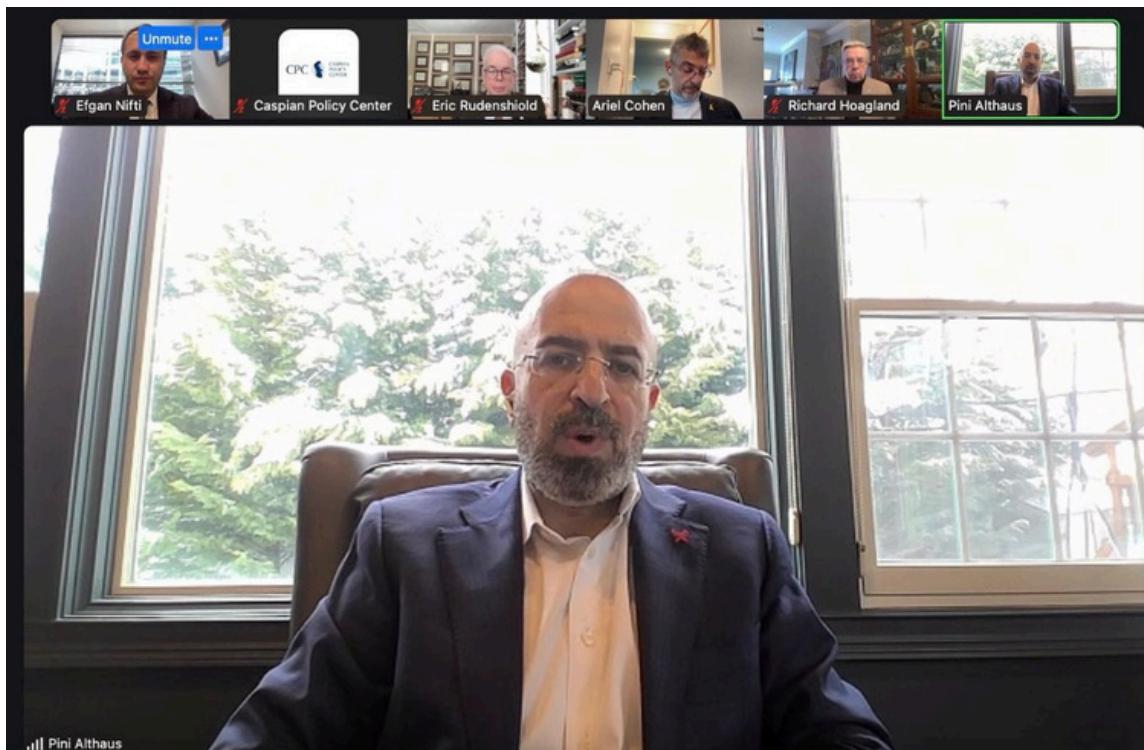
What Rocks to Look Under: How to Meet U.S. Strategic Mineral Needs in the Trans-Caspian Corridor – Webinar

Emphasizing the critical mineral potential of Ukraine, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia was the focus of the Caspian Policy Center's (CPC) February 12 webinar. Four expert analysts presented their views: **Dr. Ariel Cohen**, Managing Director of the International Tax and Investment Center (ITIC) for Energy, Growth & Security; **Pini Althaus**, Managing Partner of Cove Capital LLC; **Reed Blakemore**, Director of Research and Programs of the Global Energy Center at the Atlantic Council; and **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, Senior Fellow at CPC. The online discussion addressed areas of opportunity for cooperation between the United States and the greater Caspian countries and also Ukraine in securing strategic minerals, as well as in diversifying supply chains away from China.



The webinar launched a new CPC policy report, "A Guide for Policymakers: How to Meet US Strategic Mineral Needs," that is [available online](#). "The report provides a significant amount of insight into the potential of the Caspian region in terms of critical minerals," said CPC President **Efgan Nifti** in his opening remarks.

The discussion, moderated by CPC's Board Chairman **Ambassador (ret.) Richard Hoagland**, focused on the critical need for a holistic approach to the U.S. supply chain for strategic minerals, particularly in the face of China's dominance of supplies and refining. "Looking at the three regions in the report, I would say Central Asia, and especially Kazakhstan, are the lead source of a whole range of rare earth minerals, followed by Ukraine, and then followed by South Caucasus," said Ariel Cohen. Speaking on Chinese dominance of this sector, Cohen stressed that China has virtually controlled the access to and processing of critical minerals since the 1990s, and it does not shy away from using rare earths as a strategic weapon. With his firm Cove Capital having secured mineral licenses in Kazakhstan in 2023, Pini Althaus offered insights to the mining industry in both the United States and the Caspian region. "I was able to show both during the first Trump administration and the Biden administration, the National Security Council, the Department of State, and the Department of Commerce, what concessions offered by Kazakhstan looked like, and they all pledged their support," Althaus noted. Reed Blakemore also spoke of the attention paid by the last two U.S. administrations on issues associated with supply-chain dependency on China for strategic materials. "A big gap has been an ability for the administration to take almost a holistic approach to the entire supply chain," he said.



Check out the webinar, along with the full press release [here](#).

London Roundtable Discussion: A U.S. Strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle Corridor and Critical Minerals



On February 17, the Caspian Policy Center (CPC) hosted a roundtable discussion in its London office. The discussion, moderated by CPC's United Kingdom Advisor **David Moran**, focused on exploring opportunities for the United Kingdom and the United States in the Caucasus and Central Asia, recent developments, potential challenges to deeper cooperation, and the regional implications of increased engagement. CPC delegation included Advisory Board Members **David Moran** and **James Sharp**, Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, and **President Efgan Nifti**.

CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** presented his policy paper, entitled, *A Trans-Caspian Trajectory: A New U.S. Strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus*. A new CPC policy report, "A Guide for Policymakers: How to Meet US Strategic Mineral Needs," was also shared with the participants, who discussed the critical mineral potential of the Caspian region, as well as diversifying supply chains away from China.

Meeting with Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States

On February 25, CPC held a meeting with the new Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States **Aibek Moldogaziev**. During the meeting, a discussion and exchange of views took place on the policies of the new US administration and the prospects for US cooperation with the region and with Kyrgyzstan, in particular.



Central Asia Symposium at the University of Texas at Austin

**CENTRAL ASIA
POLICY SYMPOSIUM**

**Crossroads of Change:
Security, Governance, and Human Rights
in Contemporary Central Asia**



Friday, February 28
8 AM - 5 PM
&
Saturday, March 1
9 AM - 12 PM

SRH 3.122, the
LBJ School of
Public Affairs

The symposium will consist
of three distinct tracks:

- Security
- Governance
- Human Rights

Registration
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Central Eurasia, and
East European Studies
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On February 28, CPC Advisory Board Member **Dr. Marsha McGraw Olive** and CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** participated as speakers in the Central Asia Symposium, organized by the Department of Slavic & Eastern European Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Rudenshield spoke during the Security Panel, highlighting Uzbekistan's broader security vision and its evolving regional cooperation, while Dr. McGraw Olive focused her remarks on governance developments in Tajikistan.



March

Interview with Al Jazeera



On March 31, in an interview with Al Jazeera, CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** shared insights on Washington's political landscape and its relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Watch the interview [here](#).

April

Samarkand International Climate Forum

On April 4-5, CPC's United Kingdom Adviser **David Moran** and President **Efgan Nifti** attended the Samarkand Climate Forum, organized by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan in cooperation with a number of international organizations and partners. The forum serves as a key international platform aimed at fostering climate dialogue, sharing experience, and promoting sustainable development initiatives in Central Asia.



David Moran
@DavidMoranUK



Opening speeches at the **#Samarkand** Climate Forum hosted by **@president_uz** were timely reminders of the harsh consequences of climate change faced by Central Asia. All five Presidents & EU, UN & international organisations showcased their commitment to effective partnership.



April 7-12: Visits to Tbilisi, Georgia and Yerevan, Armenia

On April 7-9, CPC's United Kingdom Adviser **David Moran** visited Tbilisi, Georgia. In Tbilisi, Moran held meetings with the Economy, Foreign and Ecology Ministries and diplomats on the Middle Corridor and Climate Change. On April 9-12, Moran traveled to Yerevan, Armenia, where he held meetings with government officials, members of the parliament, academia and diplomats to discuss COP17 preparations.



Roundtable Discussion on Uzbekistan's Strategic Role in Strengthening Regional Connectivity

"We meet at a moment of transformation in the Central Asia region – profound transformation is underway across our region and the new frontiers of cooperation, particularly with the United States and the broader Trans-Caspian community," said Ambassador **Javlon Vakhabov**, the Managing Director of Uzbekistan's International Institute for Central Asia (IICA), during a discussion at the Caspian Policy Center (CPC) on April 9. The discussion focused on the strategic importance of Uzbekistan's role in the Trans-Caspian Region, as well as the future trajectory of U.S.-Uzbekistan bilateral relations, exploring opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the two countries. Chairman of the CPC Board Ambassador (ret.) **Richard Hoagland** gave welcoming remarks and moderated the discussion. CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** spoke of the rapid rate of change in the region and what this can mean for the future.



Javlon Vakhabov
@JavlonVakhabov



Delighted to speak earlier today at the Caspian Policy Center ([@caspiancenter](https://twitter.com/caspiancenter)) in Washington, D.C., sharing with Central Asia professionals and colleagues how Uzbekistan views its strategic role in strengthening regional connectivity, the profound transformations underway across our region, and the new frontiers of cooperation—particularly with the United States and the broader Trans-Caspian community.



Ambassador Vakhabov addressed recent developments in the Caspian region, potential challenges and opportunities for enhancing cooperation, and the regional implications of increased U.S. engagement. A central part of Vakhabov's remarks focused on the critical-mineral potential of Uzbekistan. Vakhabov mentioned that with only 40% of Uzbekistan's territory already geologically surveyed, there are 76 active rare earth minerals projects worth \$2.6 billion in value.



Following the roundtable discussion, the signing ceremony for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreement between CPC and IICA took place in the CPC office. The MoU signifies a shared commitment to fostering cooperation, mutual understanding, and collaboration between think tanks in the United States and Uzbekistan. Through this partnership, the two organizations will aim to strengthen bilateral relations, exchange expertise, and promote joint initiatives that address issues of mutual interest.

Read the full press release [here](#).

3rd Annual Graduate Student Conference on Central Asia

On April 18, CPC Advisory Board Member **Dr. Marsha McGraw Olive** delivered keynote remarks, entitled "*Strains and Potential Gains: Trump's Evolving Worldview and the Future of Central Asia*," at the 3rd Annual Graduate Student Conference organized by the Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Dr. McGraw Olive's keynote remarks focused on how recent geopolitical shocks—including shifting U.S. foreign policy under President Trump—may drive a paradigm shift in Central Asia, examining the implications for American engagement, great power competition, and the strategic choices facing regional leaders amid growing global uncertainty.

Trans-Caspian Connectivity at the House of Lords



"With the cooperation of Caspian littoral states, this region can become a strategic trade corridor between Europe and China," said Lord **David Evans** of Watford during the discussion organized by the Caspian Policy Center (CPC) at the House of Lords in London, United Kingdom on April 22. The discussion, moderated by CPC Advisory Board Member **James Sharp**, focused on exploring opportunities for the United Kingdom in the Caucasus and Central Asia, recent developments, potential challenges to deeper cooperation, and the regional implications of increased engagement. CPC delegation included Advisory Board Member James Sharp, Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, and President **Efgan Nifti**. The event brought together a wide range of participants, including ambassadors and diplomats of regional embassies in the UK, members of both chambers of the British Parliament, international experts, and media representatives.



Hosting the event, Member of the House of Lords, Lord David Evans, gave welcoming remarks, highlighting the geopolitical and economic significance of the Trans-Caspian region, likening it to the modern Silk Road. Lord Evans specifically emphasized Azerbaijan's role as a reliable partner, as well as the Caspian region's abundance of critical mineral resources.



"In his opening remarks, President of CPC **Efgan Nifti** underlined the region's growing diplomatic engagement. "During COP29, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on alternative energy cooperation. Plans for a submarine cable to transmit electricity to Europe via Georgia are also notable," he noted, adding that the United Kingdom already has established economic ties in the region and sees potential for deeper collaboration.



CPC's Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** stated that a "modern era of exploration" is underway across the region, driven by significant advancements in connectivity and infrastructure. "Over the past three years, the Middle Corridor—the Trans-Caspian transport route—has been developed from the ground up," he remarked. "Today, this corridor is actively facilitating trade between Asia and Europe, with global logistics companies such as Japan's Maersk already utilizing the route. What was once a strategic vision has now become an operational reality." Following the opening remarks, CPC Advisory Board Member **James Sharp** introduced the ambassadorial panel, which included remarks from the Ambassadors of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan to the UK.



Azerbaijan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, **Elin Suleymanov**, highlighted recent strides in regional cooperation, noting that enhanced connectivity is developing organically from within the region. He welcomed progress in normalization efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, emphasizing the value of direct dialogue and regional ownership in resolving disputes. Türkiye's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, **Osman Koray Ertas**, echoed the growing international focus on the region, noting its rising prominence on the Western agenda. "Türkiye has long championed the development of the Trans-Caspian corridor, and current geopolitical conditions now support meaningful progress," he stated. "Recent gas supply agreements and infrastructure initiatives clearly demonstrate this momentum."



Uzbekistan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, **Ravshan Usmanov**, highlighted Uzbekistan's strategic position at the heart of Central Asia, emphasizing its commitment to a regional approach in addressing shared challenges. He also underscored Uzbekistan's collaboration with Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Georgia on advancing energy and connectivity initiatives across the Caspian Sea. Ambassador of Armenia to the UK **Varuzhan Nersesyan** emphasized that the region needs long-term peace, where all the countries are connected by active economic, political, and cultural ties. In this regard, he spoke on the Crossroads of Peace initiative by his government to unblock all transportation and communication links in the region.



Bauyrzhan Nurbalin, Counsellor for Political Affairs at the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the UK, emphasized the region's readiness for international cooperation. He highlighted the European Union's recent efforts to strengthen connectivity in the Caspian region through initiatives such as the Global Gateway. Senior Counsellor of Georgia's Embassy to the United Kingdom **Nunu Mosiashvili** reaffirmed the country's strong commitment to dialogue and active engagement in the development of the Trans-Caspian corridor.

Read the full press release [here](#).

Navigating Geopolitical Shifts: Central Asia's Quest for Autonomy and Sustainable Development



On April 29, CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** participated as a panelist in the workshop "Navigating Geopolitical Shifts: Central Asia's Quest for Autonomy and Sustainable Development," organized by George Washington University's Central Asia Program (CAP) and the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES). Speaking on the panel titled "Stuck Between Great Powers? Central Asia Looking for Economic Autonomy and Alternatives," Dr. Rudenshield discussed the region's pursuit of economic autonomy in an increasingly multipolar world, with a particular focus on efforts by Central Asian states to diversify their economies.

You can watch Dr. Rudenshield's remarks [here](#), beginning at 30:09.

May

CAREC Central Asia Climate Change Conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

On May 11-15, CPC's United Kingdom Adviser David Moran visited Ashgabat, Turkmenistan for the 7th Central Asia Climate Change Conference (CACCC) organized by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). Click [here](#) to read David Moran's summary of the conference.



U.S.-Georgia Strategic Reset Under Scrutiny – Interview with ANewZ



On May 15, Anastasiya Lavrina from Azerbaijani news agency ANewZ TV interviewed CPC Chairman of the Board **Ambassador (ret.) Richard Hoagland** to discuss the current U.S. administration's foreign policy toward the South Caucasus and its shifting stance on Georgia.

Watch the interview [here](#).

Trans-Caspian Voices: Infrastructure, Minerals, and Diplomacy in Focus – Webinar

Rising international interest in the Caspian region—evident through heightened diplomatic activity and growing global focus on the area's vast reserves of critical minerals—was the central theme of a webinar held on May 21 by the Caspian Policy Center (CPC). The online discussion unpacked recent developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus, discussing what concrete steps key outside actors can take to help deepen further engagement with the region. Panelists included Ambassador **Alim Bayel**, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan; **Dr. Fariz Ismailzade**, Member of Parliament of Azerbaijan and Vice Rector, Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA); Ambassador **Matthew Klimow**, CPC Board Member and Former U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan; Ambassador **Javlon Vakhabov**, Managing Director of the International Institute for Central Asia in Uzbekistan; **James Sharp**, CPC Board Member and Former United Kingdom (UK) Ambassador to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan; and **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, Senior Fellow at CPC moderated.

"We have seen a flurry of diplomatic engagement with the region over the last few months, which shows the Caspian region's increasing importance globally," said CPC President **Efgan Nifti**, especially highlighting the European Union (EU)-Central Asia Summit that took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in April. Commenting on the U.S. engagement in the region, Nifti said, "We've seen EU, the Gulf countries, and other global actors more engaged in the region, but I still believe that as a global power, U.S. engagements in the region will amplify and we will hear more conversations on that matter." The discussion, moderated by CPC Senior Fellow Dr. Eric Rudenshield, focused on examining prospects for greater regional cooperation, and assessing the broader implications of these evolving dynamics for the region's future. "One of the key recent developments in the region has been empowerment of *Türkiye*," said Dr. Fariz Ismailzade. He also spoke on the increased engagement of the EU in not only Central Asia, but also now in the South Caucasus.

"We are gathered here at the moment of profound change – the COP29 summit revealed the early concept of new competition for the minerals that will drive the green economy," stressed Ambassador Javlon Vakhabov, focusing his remarks on the new global power competition for access to critical minerals. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan Alim Bayel spoke on the unprecedented level of intraregional cooperation. Speaking on the success of the C5+1 format, Ambassador Bayel also praised Azerbaijan's participation in the Central Asia Heads of State summits in the last two years. "We actually view Azerbaijan, and whole of the South Caucasus for that matter, as a natural extension of Central Asia. I think that this C5+1 format can be a model to be followed by the other South Caucasus countries," he emphasized. CPC Board Member and former Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan James Sharp remarked on the global geopolitical competition and the increasing role of smaller states. "Smaller countries now have more choices, and don't have to align in just one particular relationship," Sharp said. He also touched on the EU's recently heightened approach to the region, highlighting the Global Gateway Initiative and how it "recognized the need for connectivity, as von der Leyen made a brief reference to the South Caucasus being the central component of the Middle Corridor."



The webinar was also the first public opportunity to introduce CPC's newest board member, former U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan Matthew Klimow. Klimow's remarks focused on U.S. strategic priorities and direction in the region, especially with the new U.S. administration in Washington. Ambassador Klimow stressed that the U.S. maintains its strategic interests in the region, which has historically focused on "sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and that a politically cohesive Central Asia with five countries cooperating in security matters, infrastructure, trade, and commerce that allow them to withstand pressures from outside – political pressure from Moscow or economic pressure from China."

You can access the webinar, along with the full press release [here](#).

Trans-Caspian Voices: Infrastructure, Minerals, and Diplomacy in Focus – Webinar



On May 29-30, CPC President **Efgan Nifti**, Advisory Board Member **Daniel Runde**, and Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** participated in the Astana International Forum. Runde participated as a speaker in the panel titled “Trade as a Weapon: The Future of Economic Statecraft,” with the panel focusing on the global shift from cooperative trade frameworks to the strategic weaponization of economic relationships, examining how this transition toward a more volatile, zero-sum environment affects international commerce, business confidence, and the geopolitical positioning of regions such as Central Asia amid broader systemic fragmentation.

Dr. Rudenshield served as a speaker on the panel “Central Asia’s Next Decade: Emerging as a Global Crossroads,” which explored the region’s unprecedented progress in cooperation, connectivity, and its evolving role in global economic and geopolitical dynamics. He also moderated the panel “The Resource Race: Who Controls the Green Future,” where discussions centered on the intensifying global competition for critical minerals essential to the green energy transition, as well as Central Asia’s strategic advantages, supply chain vulnerabilities, technological challenges, and the environmental governance issues shaping future geopolitical trends.

June

Visit to Baku, Azerbaijan

On June 1-4, CPC delegation led by President **Efgan Nifti** and Chairman of the Board Ambassador (ret.) **Richard Hoagland**, along with Advisory Board Members **James Sharp**, Ambassador (ret.) **Matthew Klimow**, and Senior Fellow Dr. **Eric Rudenshield**, traveled to Baku, Azerbaijan. During the visit, CPC delegation held meetings with senior government officials, as well as representatives from academia and the think tank community. The delegation also conducted field visits to the Karabakh region and the Baku-Alat Sea Port.



July

3rd Caspian Connectivity Conference in London

Focusing on the theme, Harnessing the Momentum, Building on the Synergies, the Caspian Policy Center (CPC) hosted its third London Conference on Trans-Caspian Connectivity at Arundel House in Temple Place, London on July 2. The event brought together key stakeholders from the United Kingdom and the Caspian Region to discuss and strategize how to enhance connectivity and trade across the Middle Corridor, which connects countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia to Europe, China, and South Asia.

The packed event featured senior economic, finance, and development experts from the United Kingdom and from countries across the European Union (EU), as well as the Caspian region who discussed policy objectives and practical efforts for enhancing connectivity along the Middle Corridor that stretches across the Caucasus and Central Asia. Also speaking were senior experts from international organizations, financial institutions, and private-sector representatives who suggested ways to prioritize investments in the region and how to improve the regional business climate.





Efgen Nifti, President of the CPC, welcomed participants and guests to CPC's third connectivity conference in London, and thanked the International Institute for Strategic Studies for the use of their venue. Nifti noted that connection and cooperation within the Caspian region are increasing, highlighting the recent uptick in visits to the region by representatives from the European Union, China, India, and other countries, using the C5+1 format. He emphasized the increased cooperation witnessed within the Caspian region. Drawing upon the CPC team's recent visits to the region, Nifti said, "It's a pleasure to see that regional connectivity is becoming more important, as Trans-Caspian countries look for more diversified economic and political relations, trying to reach each other as well as working to gain access to global markets."

Speaking about the Middle Corridor, Nifti highlighted that cargo traffic along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route increased by 62 percent in the last year alone. "Obviously, there are challenges remaining in terms of bottlenecks, ship capacity, and software, but we have seen huge coordination in this regard that is helping to boost the potential of the Corridor," he added.



Lord John Alderdice, UK Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan and Central Asia, delivered the keynote remarks, highlighting that the UK Prime Minister's decision to expand his remit as trade envoy to cover all five Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan reflects the UK's deepening commitment to the region. "I can already see enormous opportunities for commercial and other partnerships in each of these markets, whether it's renewable energy, financial and professional services, critical minerals, aerospace, education, or the creative industries," noted Alderdice. Lord Alderdice specifically mentioned that a very significant portion of the UK's exports to Central Asia now transit through the Middle Corridor. He noted the priority areas for the UK government's activities in partnering with the region. "In Georgia and Kazakhstan, upgrading ports and rail capacity is a primary focus; in Azerbaijan, we're working together with Türkiye as partners to support the development of regional clean-energy corridors," he emphasized.



Following Lord Alderdice's keynote address, CPC's UK advisor **David Moran** introduced the first ambassadorial panel, which included remarks from the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Türkiye to the UK. Commenting on the increased importance of the Middle Corridor, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the UK **Magzhan Ilyassov** said that currently there is a lot of appetite and interest in the UK to understand what is the Middle Corridor, especially as we all witness global uncertainty becoming the new norm. "Regional conflicts, supply chain disruptions, and escalating trade wars are fundamentally reshaping the global landscape. In this context, the development of reliable, stable, and efficient trade corridors has become strategically essential for ensuring economic resilience and sustainable growth," Ilyassov noted. Ambassador of Türkiye to the UK **Osman Koray Ertaş** picked up on the strategic importance of the Middle Corridor in light of recent global supply chain disruptions, pandemics, and maritime bottlenecks. "We have witnessed what has happened with the conflict in Yemen and now the difficulties faced in the Strait of Hormuz. All these developments are underlining the growing importance of this corridor," he emphasized. Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the UK **Elin Suleymanov** echoed the comments made by his colleagues, arguing that the crises underscored the necessity for regional connectivity. He commended the trajectory of the development of regional integration, arguing that initiatives such as the Middle Corridor are "organic to the region, with the connectivity between Azerbaijan and Central Asia being so important because it opens so many doors for opportunity."



The next panel, moderated by CPC board member **James Sharp**, and entitled **Consolidating the Corridor**, focused on integrating different aspects on connectivity on both national and regional levels. Speakers Included: **Grigory Savva**, Associate Director and Regional Head for Central Asia at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Sustainable Infrastructure Group; **Teymur Huseynov**, Group Strategy Director at PASHA LLC Holding; **Ben Godwin**, Partner at PRISM Strategic Intelligence; and **Richard Walker**, Professor of Tectonics at University of Oxford.



James Sharp, board member of CPC, kicked off the panel by stressing the multifaceted nature of connectivity along the Middle Corridor, including hard infrastructure, green energy, and aviation, as well as people-to-people links. Speaking on the EBRD's support for the Middle Corridor, Associate Director **Grigory Savva** said: "The war in Ukraine gave our work new relevance as shippers and various stakeholders started looking for alternatives to the Northern Corridor going through Russia."



Teymur Huseynov, Group Strategy Director at PASHA LLC Holding, spoke on the growth trajectory of the Azerbaijan-based group of companies that is one of the region's largest private actors in banking, insurance, and brokerage sectors. Huseynov noted that PASHA LLC Holding has been expanding into other areas, namely agriculture, engineering, construction, and hospitality, through which it has become present in Türkiye and Uzbekistan. "We do realize the responsibility of the large private entities similar to us to play their role in ensuring the connectivity in the region. When it comes to connectivity, one of the key factors is financing. Through PASHA Holding's two banks, we continue to play a significant role in terms of both financing free economic zones' development and the development of the Alat Port in Azerbaijan," said Huseynov.

Ben Godwin, Partner at PRISM Strategic Intelligence, discussed challenges facing the Caspian region, including energy transition, competition, and resource depletion. Godwin stated that while the war in Ukraine and the resulting international sanctions have made doing business, as well as transiting goods in and out of the region, much more complicated, they have also created opportunities for regional countries to build upon. "Most countries in the region, including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and even Turkmenistan, have all taken steps to develop decarbonization agendas to ensure that investors can be comfortable doing business in these markets," noted Godwin, arguing that one of the biggest challenges in the region is capital and the absence of capital investment.

Richard Walker, Professor of Tectonics at University of Oxford, focused on the connectivity across Central Asia and the South Caucasus in light of natural hazards, particularly earthquakes, which shape the pathways for connectivity and infrastructure development.



Following the first session, David Moran introduced the second ambassadorial panel that included remarks from the Ambassadors of Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the Chargé d'affaires of Georgia to the UK.

Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UK **Ulan Djusupov** stressed that his country views the development of the Trans-Caspian Corridor not only as a logistics or transit initiative, but also as a strategic driver for regional economic transformation, modernization, and sustainable growth. He spoke on the steps taken at the national level to implement transport and logistic infrastructure projects, namely the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project, which is expected to become a vital link to connect the Caspian region to the Trans-Caspian route and further to Europe.

Ambassador of Armenia to the UK **Varuzhan Nersesyan** spoke on the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He stated that the finalization of the peace agreement was a very important development and was overwhelmingly welcomed by the international community. "We believe that the signing of the peace agreement will be extremely important for the whole region, and that it will immensely contribute to the ongoing efforts of opening communications and connectivity in the region," he concluded.

George Saganelidze, Chargé d'affaires of Georgia to the UK, also emphasized the regional importance of the Middle Corridor. He underlined that "a strong Trans-Caucasian partnership is not just a regional opportunity – it is a geostrategic asset for Europe, Central Asia, and beyond. It promotes peace through connectivity, enhances energy and digital resilience, and fosters inclusive growth across borders."



The next panel, moderated by CPC board member **Roger Kangas** entitled “Working it Through and Making it Happen”, focused on connectivity challenges in various sectors. Speakers Included: **Leyla Keser**, Chair of Tethys: Trans-Eurasian Gateway; **Vladimir Pakhomov**, Chief Commercial Officer of Atyrau Airport; **Afke Schaart**, Executive Vice President of International Affairs at Eutelsat/OneWeb Group; and **Asset Onglassov**, Chief of Products at Astana International Finance Centre (AIFC).

Leyla Keser, Chair of Tethys: Trans-Eurasian Gateway, spoke on the activities of Tethys, a private-equity fund focused on critical minerals, mining-related infrastructure, and clean energy projects across Türkiye, greater Central Asia, and the Middle Corridor. Keser discussed infrastructure, finance, and sustainability in mining projects across the Caspian region: “We align corridor and critical minerals investments with real trade flows, resource supply, and industrial demand in the region.”

Vladimir Pakhomov, Chief Commercial Officer of Atyrau airport in Kazakhstan, presented the strategy for air connectivity in Western Kazakhstan. Specifically, Pakhomov discussed the goals to streamline the regional network of Western Kazakhstan into a single hub, which will create an efficient transfer point to Europe, Middle East, and the Caucasus; optimize Air Astana’s existing routes; attract transit traffic from Central Asia; and create opportunities for untapped growth in local market. **Afke Schaart**, Executive Vice President of International Affairs at Eutelsat/OneWeb Group, offered insights on Eutelsat/One Web Group’s activities in space and satellite connectivity in the region. According to Schaart, the company been engaged in connecting trains in Kazakhstan, and has already successfully connected 15 trains going from Almaty to Astana. With plans to do similar projects in Uzbekistan and maritime offerings in the Caspian Sea, the company also has gained popularity after the EU’s interest in replacing Starlink with their services in Ukraine.



The Caspian Policy Center's third London Conference on Caspian Connectivity concluded with closing remarks from David Moran, who underscored the importance of strategic partnerships and cooperative solutions to enhance energy and connectivity cooperation across the Caspian region, benefiting both the United States and the United Kingdom.

Read the full press release [**here**](#).

September

U.S. Helsinki Commission Briefing



On September 4, CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** delivered testimony before the U.S. Helsinki Commission on “The Impact on Central Asia of Russia’s War on Ukraine: Opportunities for U.S. Engagement.” In his remarks, Dr. Rudenshield examined the Caspian region’s evolving relationships with Russia and China and highlighted the significant political and economic shifts taking place within the region as a result of the conflict.

You can read Dr. Rudenshield’s testimony [here](#), and watch the briefing [here](#).

Book Presentation at the U.S Congress



On September 17, CPC President **Efgan Nifti** addressed U.S.-Uzbekistan relations at the U.S. Congress during the presentation of “New Uzbekistan: The Path of Shavkat Mirziyoyev.” The event was attended by over 70 participants, including representatives of the U.S. Congress, the White House, the Department of State, key U.S. ministries and agencies, leading companies and business associations, as well as experts and journalists.

6th Caspian Business Forum in New York



On September 23, CPC held the sixth annual Caspian Business Forum in New York in partnership with the embassies of the Caspian Region. The event brought together key stakeholders from the United States and the Caspian Region to discuss and strategize emerging business and energy landscape across the South Caucasus and Central Asia, with a focus on growing regional connectivity and finance.

Efgen Nifti, President of the Caspian Policy Center, gave opening remarks outlining the remarkable developments that have taken place in the Caspian region in the last year. Nifti highlighted how the historic signing of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, witnessed by President Donald Trump, can serve to unlock the vast potential of the South Caucasus and the wider Caspian region. He noted that these changes are driving increased regional cooperation and opening up lucrative business opportunities that were previously unimaginable.





The first keynote speaker was to be Deputy Secretary of State **Christopher Landau**. Due to a last-minute change, his remarks were delivered by his Senior Advisor, **Caleb Orr**. Commenting on the importance of the broader Caspian region for U.S. foreign policy, Orr made a point that, "The broader Caspian region, including the South Caucasus and Central Asia, really is a focal point for U.S. foreign policy and strategy." He also added that "this is not a short-term point of interest, it is a long-term point of emphasis, and it's something that the U.S. sees as in our strategic interest, to invest in and to build off of for many years to come."

Orr went on to highlight the importance of the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, witnessed by President Trump. "President Trump's historic peace agreement with Azerbaijan and Armenia shows the diplomatic investment that the Trump administration is placing in the region, and we think that a true peace dividend that can come about as a result of that agreement will be good for the region as a whole," Orr stated.

Speaking on the Middle Corridor, Orr added that "by avoiding the routes North through Russia and South through Iran, the Middle Corridor promises to be a revolutionary change in how commerce transits the region and is able to access the West in Europe and the U.S. TRIPP is a true example of how peace creates the conditions for trade, and how trade can then, in turn, cement peace and stability."

Orr concluded his keynote remarks by adding that "the Trump Route for International for Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) and our C5+1 cooperation create a real chance to turn peace into prosperity."



The second keynote address was provided by **Conor Coleman**, Head of Investments at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC). In this line, Coleman spoke on the importance of Trans-Caspian trade for international markets, and what the United States is doing to support its development.

"The Caspian Corridor is a key area of focus for the U.S. government from a foreign policy perspective. Our work builds on a long U.S. history of supporting the economic development across Central Asia," Coleman said.

"DFC is working to build secure, strategic investment corridors and economic zones –obviously, this aligns closely with the growing Middle Corridor," Coleman noted.

Coleman also stressed the strategic potential created by the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, adding: "The recent historic peace framework between Armenia and Azerbaijan is ushering in a new era that holds so much promise for increasing security and economic growth in the region."



The next panel featured keynote addresses from high-level representatives from the Caspian region and was moderated by Ambassador (ret.) **Richard Hoagland**, Chairman of the CPC Board. Speakers included: **Hikmet Hajiyev**, Assistant of the President of Azerbaijan; **Magzum Mirzagaliyev**, Advisor to the President of Kazakhstan; **Öztürk Selvitop**, Director General for Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Türkiye; and **Lasha Darsalia**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.





Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant of the President of Azerbaijan, delivered a [letter](#) written by President Ilham Aliyev to the participants of the 6th Caspian Business Forum. The letter highlighted the importance of the Middle Corridor as a strategic project providing a reliable and secure route connecting Europe and Asia through the Caspian Sea, and “serving as the shortest and most efficient pathway for cargo transportation from Asia to Europe and back.”

“Today, we can proudly say that, thanks to Azerbaijan’s long-term vision and tireless efforts, a major project like the Middle Corridor, which provides better synergy between Asia and Europe, has become a reality,” the letter further read. It was also noted that over the past three years, cargo shipments along the Middle Corridor through Azerbaijan have grown by approximately 90 percent, while transit times have been significantly shortened. Projections indicate that by 2030, the freight capacity of the Middle Corridor will triple compared to 2021, with transit times expected to be cut in half.

In the letter, President Aliyev also mentioned the TRIPP initiative established at the August 8 summit between Armenia and Azerbaijan: “I am sure that TRIPP, to become the next crucial segment of the Middle Corridor, will serve as a key transport link connecting Asia and Europe, expanding the transit capacity for international cargo shipments, and contributing to the prosperity of regional countries as well as their integration into global supply chains.”



Magzum Mirzagaliyev, Advisor to the President of Kazakhstan, stressed the importance of Kazakhstan's energy cooperation with the United States, noting: "The energy sector is the cornerstone of our economic and bilateral relationship with the United States...We align with U.S. energy priorities." "On average, 24 percent of U.S. uranium imports originate from Kazakhstan. And we are willing to strengthen our role as a trusted and reliable partner of the U.S. in nuclear energy," Mirzagaliyev stated. Mirzagaliyev also highlighted how the Middle Corridor is rapidly becoming one of the main international trade routes, and the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity opens new possibilities for regional cooperation. "We welcome the TRIPP initiative and we would like to participate in the implementation of the Zangezur corridor to strengthen connectivity along the Middle Corridor," he said.

Öztürk Selvitop, Director General for Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Türkiye, spoke on Türkiye's energy strategy and how it focuses on increasing renewable energy sources, aiming to quadruple wind and solar capacity to 33 gigawatts in 10 years. In this regard, Selvitop specifically mentioned the Green electricity transmission corridor signed between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye and Bulgaria. Commenting on Türkiye's traditional energy sources, Selvitop noted: "We are serving as a natural gas trading hub. We are trying to bring more gas to the region, for both security of supply for Türkiye and for the region." He added that Türkiye is actively pursuing diversification of its natural gas sources, noting in particular that imports from Turkmenistan began in March.



Lasha Darsalia, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, discussed the growing importance of transport connectivity in the region through the projects such as the Middle Corridor. “The Middle Corridor represents not just an alternative, but a vital complement to existing transit routes,” Darsalia said. “The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and the Anaklia Deep Sea Port are all parts of our mission for investing in connectivity. But connectivity is not only about the physical infrastructure – it is also about collaboration, harmonization, custom efficiency, and digital integration,” he noted.



The Forum’s second panel, “Critical Minerals—Solving Supply Chain Challenges,” focused on how the United States is increasingly turning to resource-rich regions like the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and Ukraine as it faces mounting pressure to secure stable access to critical minerals and rare earth elements. Moderated by **Dr. Marsha McGraw-Olive**, Caspian Policy Board Member, the discussion included insights from **Michael Cofield**, Senior Attorney-Advisor at the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP); **Orkhan Mammadov**, Chairman of the Management Board of the Small and Medium Business Development Agency (KOBIA) of the Republic of Azerbaijan; **Helaina Matza**, Chief Strategic Development Officer at TechMet Ltd; and **Laura Brank**, Partner at Dechert LLP.



Moderator of the panel and CPC Board Member **Dr. Marsha McGraw Olive** kicked off the discussion by highlighting the four necessities for addressing supply-chain resilience challenges in the region: investor confidence; bankable projects; extensive upgrades in energy access; and transport and logistics to reach the market. Panelists highlighted the increasing U.S. focus on securing reliable access to critical minerals and rare earth elements—resources abundant in the Caspian region—by enhancing supply-chain resilience through deeper partnerships with the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Speakers also addressed the policies adopted by regional governments to foster business-friendly environments, emphasizing their importance in attracting and sustaining investment.



Michael Cofield, Senior Attorney-Advisor at the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), picked up on the importance of confidence-building measures necessary for regional governments to implement in order to attract further investments from the U.S. “U.S. and Western businesses need confidence that projects they are involved in will not be misappropriated by malign actors or others,” said Cofield. Cofield then added that there is a real opportunity for partnership between the U.S. and the Caspian region: “This part of the world has waited for years to see more investment from the U.S. government and partners. There were many times over the past 10 years discussing the possibilities of the Middle Corridor. Now it is becoming a reality.”

Laura Brank, Partner at Dechert LLP, spoke on the increasing commercial bargaining power that Central Asian states have started to enjoy over the past few years. “I would say that with respect to Central Asia in the early days of the breakup of the Soviet Union, these countries did not have strong negotiating power. But the dynamic has really changed now, and there needs to be an alignment of interest,” Brank said. She also underlined that there has been a great deal of progress in the region in respect to the “laws on the books.”



Helaina Matza, Chief Strategic Development Officer at TechMet Ltd, a U.S.-government-backed critical minerals investment firm, spoke about the numerous opportunities for investment that TechMet has identified in the Caspian region, particularly with regards to building strategic partnerships and working with sovereign lenders. She said: "We have been looking at market entry in the region. We invest all across the value chain, so, not just on the production side...There are several opportunities that we see in the Caspian region."

Orkhan Mammadov, Chairman of the Management Board of the Small and Medium Business Development Agency (KOBIA) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, highlighted Azerbaijan's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), noting that Azerbaijan was ranked seventh globally in FDI potential for last year by the FDI Intelligence publication of the Financial Times. Mammadov also highlighted the key role KOBIA plays in supporting investors and bringing new businesses into Azerbaijan. Mammadov added that the resolution of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has allowed Azerbaijan to explore new critical mineral opportunities, noting that "with the liberation of the Karabakh region, we expanded the opportunity to utilize regional rich mineral resources like gold, mercury, chromite, zinc, copper, and lead."



In his closing remarks, CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** noted the political and economic momentum behind the Trans-Caspian Corridor. “Tonight, we have heard that the broader trans-Caspian region is a focal point of U.S. foreign policy,” said Dr. Rudenshield, while also referring to the positive signs conveyed from the regional voices discussing the aspects of the Middle Corridor as a reliable and secure road. Highlighting the region’s transformation to an investment destination for the U.S. and other Western countries, Dr. Rudenshield added: “The deals of the last few weeks, the (U.S.) President’s engagement with Armenia and Azerbaijan, should dispel any notion that the Trans-Caspian region is anything but central to U.S. thinking.”



The 6th Caspian Business Forum underscored the region’s strategic importance, with a focus on the Middle Corridor, highlighting the need for alignment of interests among government, society, and businesses to maximize stability and growth.

Read the Forum’s full press release [here](#).

Roundtable with Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan



On September 24, CPC hosted a roundtable in New York with H.E. **Hikmet Hajiyev**, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan. Representatives of U.S. academia, think tanks, and the diplomatic community attended the roundtable to discuss U.S.-Caspian relations, including connectivity, security, and strategic partnerships.



1st UK - Azerbaijan Policy Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan

On September 25-26, CPC's UK Adviser **David Moran** and Board Member **James Sharp** participated in the 1st UK-Azerbaijan Policy Dialogue, organized by the Institute for Development and Diplomacy (IDD) of ADA University in Baku Azerbaijan. The two-day program was attended by more than 50 experts, including members of parliament, senior government officials, researchers from universities and think tanks, media representatives, and independent experts.



October

U.S. - Central Asia Think Tank Forum

On October 1, CPC, in partnership with the International Institute for Central Asia (IICA) and The Heritage Foundation, co-organized the inaugural **U.S.-Central Asia Think Tank Forum** in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Forum was convened to mark the 10th anniversary of the C5+1 cooperation framework with the United States. It brought together more than 120 participants, including heads and members of diplomatic missions, leaders of prominent think tanks and research institutes from the United States and Central Asia, representatives of ministries and agencies, as well as members of the American business community based in Uzbekistan. CPC President **Efgan Nifti**, Chairman of the Board Ambassador (ret.) **Richard Hoagland**, Advisory Board Member **James Carafano**, and Senior Fellow **Eric Rudenshield** delivered remarks at the Forum.





CPC President **Efgan Nifti** emphasized that the Central Asia-U.S. partnership will continue successfully and that think tanks will play a pivotal role in deepening cooperation between the two sides.



"Taking into account the growing role of the Central Asian countries in global affairs, as well as the strengthening position of Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus region, it is necessary to consider the prospect of transforming the CA5 format into a CA6 format by including Azerbaijan".

Richard E. Hoagland

Former U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, Former Charge d'affaires to Turkmenistan



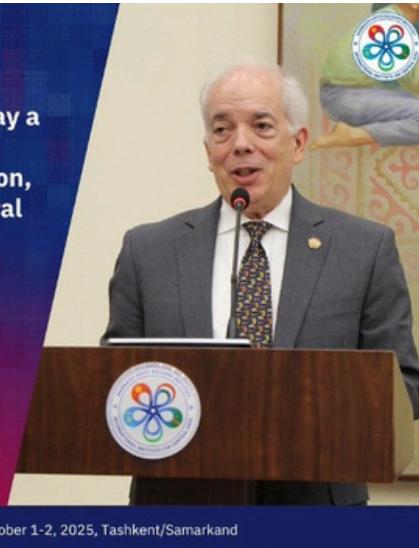
The Inaugural U.S. - Central Asia Think Tank Forum, October 1-2, 2025, Tashkent/Samarkand

Chairman of the CPC Board Amb. (ret.) **Richard Hoagland** emphasized that the C5+1 has become a unique platform enabling Central Asian nations to speak with one voice, amplify their influence internationally, and build a solid foundation for addressing issues of security, trade, and regional resilience.

"For a long time, Central Asia was regarded merely as a source of traditional energy resources – oil, gas, and coal. However, today a new chapter is opening, linked to the development of rare earth metals in the region, which may become a defining factor in Central Asia's geopolitical independence".

Eric Rudenshield

Senior Fellow, Caspian Policy Center



The Inaugural U.S. - Central Asia Think Tank Forum, October 1-2, 2025, Tashkent/Samarkand

CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** underlined that the true potential of Central Asia lies not in raw mineral extraction but in processing industries. He cited the example of lithium ore, which, once processed into lithium carbonate for batteries, multiplies in value.

Navigating the Nexus: New Horizons for Peace & Trade in the South Caucasus



On October 7, CPC Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** participated as a speaker at an event organized by the United States Energy Association (USEA) titled “Navigating the Nexus: New Horizons for Peace & Trade in the South Caucasus.” Dr. Rudenshield spoke on the panel “*Energy Impact and Geopolitical Opportunities*,” where he emphasized that sustained credibility will depend on both speed and substance, warning that without early and tangible benefits for Armenia, momentum toward peace could quickly dissipate. Panelists also agreed that Armenia’s future energy security—long constrained by its dependence on Russia and Iran—could be fundamentally reoriented through new energy and infrastructure interconnections with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

Astana Think Tank Forum



On October 15–16, CPC President **Efgan Nifti** and Senior Fellow Dr. **Eric Rudenshield** participated in the [Astana Think Tank Forum](#). Rudenshield participated as a speaker in the panel titled “The End of Unipolarity – Shifting Power Balances and the Future of Multilateralism,” exploring how the diffusion of power is reshaping international cooperation and global governance. Nifti participated as a speaker in the panel titled “New Geography of Connectivity Infrastructure Networks as Catalysts of Prosperity,” which highlighted the Middle Corridor’s emergence as a strategic Eurasian artery and positioned Central Asia as a rapidly developing hub for trade, transport, energy, and digital connectivity.



The U.S. in the South Caucasus: Mapping New Strategic Opportunities



On October 23, CPC President **Efgan Nifti** participated as a speaker at an event organized by the Hudson Institute titled "The U.S. in the South Caucasus: Mapping New Strategic Opportunities." Nifti spoke on the panel "Regional Implications of Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace," where he discussed new opportunities for regional cooperation, next steps for energy and transit integration, and the challenges in sustaining peace in a new security architecture.

You can access the full transcript of the event, as well as the video footage [here](#).

Meeting with CAMCA Fellows from Rumsfeld Foundation



On October 30, CPC held a meeting with the Rumsfeld Foundation's Fall 2025 fellows from Central Asia, Mongolia, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan (CAMCA) to discuss U.S. relations with the Greater Caspian region.

November

ICCD Business Leaders Summit in İstanbul, Türkiye

On November 2, CPC Board Member **James Sharp** participated as a speaker at the Business Leaders Summit “*The Private Sector as a Strategic Partner for Sustainable Development*” organized by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development (ICCD) at İstanbul, Türkiye. Sharp spoke on the panel “*Setting the Policy Agenda: Shaping the Economic Future of OIC Countries*.” In his remarks, Sharp highlighted the government's role in fostering a supportive environment for the private sector through reforms that reduce bureaucracy and corruption.



A Decade of Partnership: What Lies Ahead for C5+1?

As the United States and Central Asian leaders prepared to meet for the C5+1 Presidential Summit in Washington, DC, CPC convened a discussion on November 5, exploring the future of U.S.-Central Asia cooperation. Ten years after its launch in 2015, the C5+1 has become a central pillar of U.S. engagement with Central Asia—bringing together Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan with the United States to advance regional stability, sovereignty, and connectivity. For this discussion, CPC convened regional and U.S. diplomats, policy experts, and members of academia and the business community to examine how the C5+1 can approach its second decade—deepening economic ties, strengthening regional resilience, and positioning Central Asia as a reliable partner in a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.





CPC President **Efgan Nifti** and Chairman of the Board Ambassador (ret.) **Richard Hoagland** kick-started the discussion on what lies ahead for the C5+1 format. They highlighted recent progress within the C5+1 framework, noting that the Trump administration brought renewed attention to Central Asia and underscored shared interests in critical minerals, investment, and global connectivity.



The first panel, entitled Deepening Strategic Partnership Amid Global Shifts, was moderated by **Catherine Putz**, the Managing Director for The Diplomat website, who recognized that there are a number of challenges and opportunities ahead for the region as it takes the next steps. The panelists took a deeper look at the significance of the C5+1 format historically and discussed plans for deepening cooperation with the region within the framework of the upcoming Presidential Summit. **Dr. Eric Rudenshield**, CPC's Senior Fellow for Caspian Affairs, commented on the emerging cooperation both with and within the region, Rudenshield said: "There are lots of reasons to push for broader cooperation, and part of that is getting rid of Soviet legacies." Rudenshield further spoke on the importance of addressing environmental issues: "Central Asia has to tackle the climate change issue, and it has to be more than drip irrigation.... Environmental challenges are a concern of interest for Central Asia, and they are on the C5+1 agenda. If they push for it, Washington will respond."



Javlon Vakhabov, Managing Director of the International Institute for Central Asia (IICA) in Tashkent and former Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the United States, spoke on the historic significance of the C5+1 Presidential Summit taking place in Washington, DC, on November 6. Vakhabov noted that it's of great importance for the region to stand united in the face of global geopolitical changes: "Global shifts are forcing many countries to pick sides, but Central Asia remains firm – we are not picking sides, we are engaging with all of our partners to make sure that Central Asia remains prosperous, resilient, and secure." He added that these changes include instability in maritime routes, and global trade wars, which further emphasize the growing importance of the Middle Corridor. Vakhabov also spoke on the results of the recent U.S.-Central Asia Think Tank Forum that IICA organized in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in October. Vakhabov concluded by stating that it is important for Uzbekistan to continue doing commerce with the United States, and that he believes that more major deals between the two countries can be accomplished under the Trump administration.



Zhandos Shaimardanov, Director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies (KazISS), picked up on the positive changes witnessed in the region: “Intellectual awakening in Central Asia is reflected in two major events that we held recently in the region: the U.S.-Central Asia Think Tank Forum and the Astana Think Tank Forum.” Shaimardanov spoke on the multi-vector foreign policy pursued by a growing number of states in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. “Multi-vector foreign policy allows us to bring together those who usually sit on different sides on the tables and have them talk to each other on issues such as nuclear disarmament,” he said. Commenting on U.S.-Central Asia relations, Shaimardanov stated that ties are entering a new phase that is pragmatic and mutually beneficial, with “American companies ... already partnering with Central Asia in order to develop more effective supply chains for the global economy.”



Clark Adams, former Director for Central Asian Affairs in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the U.S. Department of Defense, noted the progress achieved in regard to the C5+1 format: “For the last 10 years, the C5+1 has done an awful lot for Central Asian states to work together more closely, and that serves everybody’s interest.” Adams discussed several challenges facing the region, noting that current border and customs procedures are major factors contributing to bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of regional cohesion. Looking ahead, Adams argued that the key question will be finding what is the more substantive way of engaging within the C5+1 format: “In the longer term, the strength in numbers idea that drives C5+1 format in the economic and political realm will eventually drive the security realm.”



The second panel, entitled *“The Next Phase of U.S.-Central Asia Cooperation: Economic Connectivity, Energy, and Resilience”* was moderated by **Eric Green**, Advisory Board Member of CPC, and former Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia at the U.S. National Security Council. Green opened the discussion by emphasizing that deepening economic ties and strengthening regional resilience in Central Asia have long been priorities not only for the region’s countries but also for the United States since those countries’ independence from the Soviet Union. He noted that the United States has significant ground to make up, as China has become Central Asia’s largest trading partner with \$95 billion in trade—roughly double that of Russia.



Brianne Todd, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, underscored the importance of fostering economic resilience in Central Asia, noting that many of the C5+1's achievements over the past decade have centered on strengthening the region's economic foundations. While praising the work done previously in the region by U.S. agencies such as USAID, Todd stated: "When you look at the assistance that we were giving Central Asia just last year, the numbers weren't very large.... Assistance wasn't really the model to begin with, and I think we really do want more foreign direct investment." Todd then stressed that water management remains a critical issue for the region for its mining, refining, and processing of the critical minerals, as well as for data centers. She added that there are several tools at the disposal of the U.S. administration to work with the countries of the region: "Whether that is the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), or the Export-Import Bank (EXIM), there is the technical assistance to be able to work on some of these environmental, and specifically water-related, issues."



Iskander Akylbayev, CEO of Xander Group in Kazakhstan, spoke on the critical minerals dialogue, which has been at the forefront of the agenda for U.S.–Central Asia partnership discussions. “We need partnership with the U.S. on processing, refining of critical minerals to build a sustainable supply chain where we can also be an equal partner,” said Akylbayev. He further added that Kazakhstan is working on the policies for critical minerals, where the business community is also involved: “We need to develop ports (Aktau, Kuryk), work with our partners in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and also in Europe.”



Theresa Sabonis-Helf, Professor of Practice at Georgetown University, focused on the energy dynamics of Central Asia. "Every one of the CA states has added more power-generating capacity and almost all of them are experiencing frequent crises," she said, arguing that critical minerals, pursuing a data future – all these priority areas rely on a reconstruction of the electricity grid of Central Asian countries. Speaking on natural gas trends in the region, she added that with natural gas exports declining in countries such as Uzbekistan, some producers have increasingly turned to Russia as an alternative export destination. In this line, she emphasized, "It probably serves the region's interests more if that's renegotiated so that there is more Turkmen gas and less Russian gas in the region."



Ambassador (ret.) **Matthew Klimow**, CPC's Advisory Board Member and former U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, highlighted the incremental progress of Central Asian countries in regional integration, as exemplified by the C5+1 and B5+1 summits. Ambassador Klimow noted the significant advancements in transportation and trade facilitation, despite challenges posed by external factors: "Outside factors have intervened to push the C5+1 agenda forward as well – the aggression of Putin in Ukraine, demand for critical minerals and rare earth elements in the U.S., the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan."



Zhandos Temirgali, President of 1Thirty Holding, a Kazakhstan-originated company in chemical manufacturing and industrial innovation, welcomed bipartisan support in the United States for the C5+1 format. He underlined that especially after Russia initiated the war against Ukraine, the last three years have been important for U.S.-Central Asia relations. In this context, Temirgali spoke about the importance of the Middle Corridor, through which the overall cargo transit volume increased by 60% in 2024, reaching 4.5 million tons, with goals to reach 10 million tons within the next two or three years. He argued that Azerbaijan in this regard can be considered as a part of this region: "Central Asia is not only these five countries, but Azerbaijan as well." Temirgali concluded by thanking CPC for "creating the semantic meaning of what the Caspian region means."

The Future of US-Central Asia Relations at the Hudson Institute



On November 10, CPC President **Efgen Nifti** participated as a speaker at an event organized by the Hudson Institute titled "*The Future of US-Central Asia Relations*," discussing the outcomes of the C5+1 Summit in Washington, DC. Speakers also discussed the future of U.S. engagement in Central Asia and opportunities to deepen cooperation, especially within the C5+1 cooperation framework.

Interview with Trend News Agency



On November 15, Trend News Agency from Azerbaijan published an interview with CPC Advisory Board Member **James Sharp**. Sharp highlighted how the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) has evolved from a supplementary energy route to an essential component of European energy security, particularly in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He underscored Azerbaijan's reliability as a gas supplier and noted opportunities for further expansion and regional cooperation to enhance energy diversification and stability.

December

U.S. – Germany Partnership Dialogue in Berlin, Germany

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Last Tuesday, we were pleased to welcome a delegation of U.S. policy experts organized by the Heritage Foundation for an in-depth roundtable on the current state of German–U.S. bilateral relations.

Together, we explored recent political developments in Washington, D.C., and the strategic considerations shaping U.S. foreign policy. The discussion provided a valuable opportunity for open dialogue on the challenges and future direction of transatlantic cooperation, bringing together a select group of experts from the fields of policy and business.

Thank you to all participants for their thoughtful contributions and engaging exchange. Dr. James Carafano, Dr. Kaush Arha, [Anna Hardage](#), and [Efgan Nifti](#). Conversations like these are essential to strengthening mutual understanding and advancing constructive collaboration across the Atlantic.



On December 1, CPC President **Efgan Nifti**, as well as CPC Board Member and Senior Counselor to the President of the Heritage Foundation **James Carafano** participated in a roundtable discussion in Berlin, Germany, organized by the Aspen Institute Germany. The discussions focused on the current state of U.S.-German bilateral relations, in addition to opportunities and challenges regarding the future trajectory of Trans-Atlantic cooperation.

Energy Security Conference in London



On December 3, CPC held its *"Caspian Energy Security: Navigating New Realities"* Conference in London. The event brought together prominent voices from the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), Caspian countries, and energy and climate experts to discuss evolving energy security challenges across the regions. A significant focus of the discussions was on how, while the global energy transition is accelerating, fossil fuels will continue to play a major role for decades, even as the Caspian region emerges as a key hub for both traditional and renewable energy, new transit routes, and digital connectivity.



Efgan Nifti, President of the CPC, welcomed participants and guests while underlining the importance of the South Caucasus and Central Asia to world markets and supply chains. Nifti noted, “The Caspian region has gained unprecedented relevance in global energy markets with its vast oil and gas reserves and immense renewable energy potential. The disruption of traditional supply routes between Russia and Europe has intensified the role of Caspian states in diversifying hydrocarbon exports.”

The CPC President highlighted the Caspian region’s growing role in clean energy, particularly wind and solar power. “For the first time, Central Asian wind and solar power are being positioned not just for domestic use but also as future clean-energy supply to European markets,” Nifti said.

Nifti also discussed the growing regional connection and cooperation that has been occurring within the Caspian region, particularly the recent decision by the Central Asian countries to add Azerbaijan to the C6 format at the C5 summit in Tashkent. “This move is a huge step forward in building a strong bridge between Central Asia and the South Caucasus and enhancing connectivity across the Caspian,” he noted.



In a video keynote address, **Bob Blackman**, CBE MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Azerbaijan in the UK Parliament, set out the UK perspective on global energy security. “It’s important that we understand energy security and how we bring that not only to the UK but across the world,” Blackman said.

"At the moment, the demand for energy is increasing all the time—not only for renewables such as solar, wind, and hydro, but also for oil and gas. We also know that global temperatures are increasing, and, unless action is taken, they will reach an unsustainable level," Blackman said.

Blackman went on to highlight the Caspian region's vast energy potential and how that potential can be used to help meet European and global energy needs in a sustainable manner. "We must look at how we transform the Caspian Sea's opportunities, not just in oil and gas, but also in the use of wind power. Of course, we know there are fierce winds in the Caspian Sea that can be harnessed for that power to be utilized across Asia and into Europe.



Following the keynote address, **David Moran** introduced the ambassadorial panel, which included remarks from the Ambassadors of Türkiye, Armenia, and Uzbekistan, as well as the Chargé d'affaires of Kazakhstan and Georgia to the UK and the Counsellor at the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the UK. **Osman Koray Ertaş**, the Ambassador of Türkiye to the UK, underlined Türkiye's role as both an energy transit hub connecting Europe, the Caspian region, and the Middle East. "We have made major investments in green transformation, expanded our storage capacity, diversified our energy sources, and invested in domestic onshore and offshore resources, including in the Black Sea."

"We have already been a reliable energy partner in our larger region—Caspian Basin, the Middle East, and Europe—with major projects such as TANAP, TAP, and the Southern Gas Corridor. These relationships are not one-off arrangements but part of a strategic realignment of energy corridors," Ambassador Ertaş added.

Looking ahead to Türkiye hosting COP31 in the city of Antalya next year, Ambassador Ertaş said that Türkiye plans to use its' unique position between East and West to "act as a bridge between the Global North and South."



Ravshan Usmanov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the UK, highlighted Uzbekistan's rapid economic and population growth and increasing energy needs as a result. "Uzbekistan assigns the highest priority to ensure energy security. As our economy expands and our population grows, so too does the demand for reliable, safe and sustainable energy to meet those rising needs," he said.

Ambassador Usmanov further stressed Uzbekistan's significant potential in renewable energy, adding: "My country possesses immense energy potential—500 gigawatts in solar, 100 gigawatts in wind, and 10 gigawatts in hydropower. Unlocking even a portion of this capacity will transform Uzbekistan's energy landscape and contribute meaningfully to regional stability and global decarbonization." Ambassador Usmanov also highlighted Uzbekistan's collaboration with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Kambarata-1 hydropower project and the significant benefits that the project can bring the Caspian region. "Our cooperation with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Kambarata hydropower plant is a 4.2 billion USD project that symbolizes growing regional confidence and cooperation. Kambarata-1 is not only an economic undertaking; it is a green energy project that will expand renewable capacity and improve water management across our region."

Varuzhan Nersesyan, Ambassador of Armenia to the UK, spoke about the potential benefits of Armenia's recently signed peace agreement with Azerbaijan and the establishment of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP). Ambassador Nersesyan noted that the TRIPP "will not only reconnect Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it will create economic opportunity, support energy cooperation, and deliver peace dividends across the South Caucasus and Central Asia." "The route will also allow for energy systems to function more reliably across the borders. Stable routes enable the movements of equipment for renewable projects, support the modernization of grids and extension of pipelines, and make it possible to transit energy where it's needed. In this way, the Trump Route becomes a strategic enabler to diversify energy supply, regional market integration and ultimately a more peaceful and resilient energy landscape," Ambassador Nersesyan added.



"As a responsible nation, we are committed to achieving net zero emissions. Renewables currently account for over 6% of Kazakhstan electricity generation surpassing our 2025 target ahead of schedule. By 2030 we aim for 15% and by 2050 for 50%," said **Ruslan Karabulov**, Chargé d'affaires of Kazakhstan to the UK, about Kazakhstan's investment in the green energy transition.

However, Karabulov also noted that "while renewables shape the future, oil remains essential today as the world's primary energy source." He noted that Kazakhstan holds around 30 billion barrels of oil reserves, ranking among the top 15 oil rich countries. "Our oil remains an integral part of the global energy security mix. And in 2024 we became the third largest oil supplier to the European Union, providing 11.5% of its oil inputs," Karabulov added.



Chargé d'affaires of Georgia to the UK **Giorgi Archemashvili** highlighted Georgia's role as an important energy transit hub. "For decades, Georgia has been the key link in major regional energy corridors, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the South Caucasus gas pipeline, and the Southern Gas Corridor." He noted that "the Southern Gas Corridor via Georgia is among the most effective and immediate ways to reduce Europe's dependence on Russia's energy resources." He also stressed the importance of the Black Sea Submarine Cable project for facilitating the transit of green energy to European markets. "Laying the Black Sea submarine cable is an initiative of strategic importance, forming the foundation of a new green energy corridor," he said.

"Azerbaijan has always played a major role in energy security and European energy security," said **Gunel Salimova**, Counsellor for the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the UK, noting that Azerbaijan is currently exporting natural gas to 12 European countries (eight of which are EU member states)



Discussing Azerbaijan's vision for helping transport green energy from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to Europe, Salimova said that Azerbaijan currently has four interconnected projects—the Caspian-Black Sea-Europe, Central Asia-Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan-Turkiye, and Azerbaijan-Georgia-Bulgaria—already under feasibility studies. "Azerbaijan is envisioning how to take green energy from Central Asia and the Caspian to the European region," she said. Salimova also discussed Azerbaijan's plans to become a digital hub as part of the Digital Silk Way, which aims to establish a digital telecommunications corridor between Europe and Asia. She noted that "Azerbaijan aims to be a regional hub for the Digital Silk Way, supported by cheap electricity and favorable climatic conditions in our northern regions."



The next panel focused on European and Caspian energy challenges and developments and was moderated by CPC board member **James Sharp**. Speakers Included: **John Roberts**, Energy Security Specialist at Methinks Ltd; and **Veronika Krakovich**, Regional Head for Energy at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

James Sharp, member of CPC's advisory board, kicked off the panel by stressing that energy security means different things to different countries. "For the UK Government, energy security is largely defined as building up renewables, so we don't have to import from overseas. For the European Union, the focus is the Green Deal, plus other measures," Sharp said.



In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe, including the UK, worked hard to increase energy efficiency, speed the transition towards renewables and diversify sources. Looking ahead on the energy transition path forward, **John Roberts**, Energy Security Specialist at Methinks Ltd, agreed that the situation "has never been more critical, which means whatever alternative resources can come into play become ever more crucial." Roberts spoke on Azerbaijan's pursuit of a "twin-track policy to double its deliveries to mainstream Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor, and also to start very serious electricity exports based on renewable energy production."

"Azerbaijan is playing a crucial part in gas provision, and that role is needed for several more years, until and maybe even beyond becoming mainstream in the Black Sea," Roberts emphasized.



Michael Ritchie, Editor of Nefte Compass at Energy Intelligence, spoke about his recent visit to Turkmenistan for the 30th anniversary of the “oil and gas of Turkmenistan” conference in Ashgabat. Discussing Turkmenistan’s energy challenges, he said: “Turkmenistan is blessed with the fourth-largest gas reserves in the world, and we often hear of that Turkmenistan is fortunate to sit at the crossroads of Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The reality is slightly different. To the north Russia doesn’t want or need more gas; to the west the hurdles of crossing the Caspian look insurmountable; China to the east appears to have sated its appetite; and to the south lie further geopolitical challenges.”

Veronika Krakovich, Regional Head for Energy at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), spoke about the EBRD’s recent investments in Central Asia to support the region’s energy transition. “The past few years has shown us how geopolitical shifts, climate change and economic challenges can disrupt energy systems for Central Asia. These challenges are compounded by the region’s dependence on carbon intensive generation to clean energy. At the EBRD we have been working across Central Asia to support this transition. Today, The EBRD has invested over 3.7 billion euros in the energy sector of Central Asia through 84 projects, supporting five gigawatts of renewable capacity in the region alone,” Krakovich said.



The second panel, “Strategic Partnerships and Common Benefits”, focused on the evolving strategic partnerships between Europe and the Caspian region, examining how shared energy interests, emerging transit opportunities, regional cooperation, and expanding multilateral climate collaboration are reshaping the geopolitical landscape and strengthening the role of Caspian states in global energy and climate discussions.

Moderated by **James Sharp**, the discussion included insights from **Javlon Vakhabov**, Managing Director of International Institute for Central Asia (IICA); **Dr. Roger Kangas**, Professor of Central Asia Studies at Georgetown University’s Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies; **Charles Hendry**, former UK Trade Envoy for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and former UK Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change; **Dr. Joanna Depledge**, Research Fellow at the Cambridge Centre for Environment Mott MacDonald; and **Kakajan Berdiyev**, Co-Founder and Managing Partner at Maslahatcylar Consulting Firm.

Speaking on the importance of Central Asian states moving towards a green economy, **Javlon Vakhabov**, stated that “The region understands the risks of overdependence on fossil fuels, both in terms of economic volatility and geopolitical exposure. So global energy markets are undergoing profound dissemination, with investors and major consumers shifting towards low carbon energy sources, and if Central Asia does not adapt, it risks being left behind in emerging green supply chains and imposing access to export markets in the future.” Vakhabov also discussed how transitioning to green energy is increasingly boosting Central Asia’s investment appeal. “Kazakhstan’s nearly \$4 billion in green deals at COP29, Uzbekistan’s more than \$22 billion in renewable investment, and Tajikistan’s goal of 100% green electricity by 2032 all signal a shift attracting global capital,” Vakhabov said.



Speaking on the security dimension of regional energy dynamics, **Dr. Roger Kangas**, Professor of Central Asia Studies at Georgetown University's Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, stated, "External actors want to see stable transit of energy resources, but the burden of security will increasingly be placed on the actors themselves in the region." Kangas also touched on threats to critical infrastructure. On the topic of which actors would like to see energy and transit projects disrupted, Dr Kangas talked about both state (Iran, Russia) and non-state actors (like Islamic State-Khorasan): "We must ask the difficult question: who would like to see these projects fail? Who would like to see these routes disrupted?" He added that it's important to consider non-state actors such as extremist groups who may want to disrupt routes like TAPI or CASA-1000 to hurt their adversaries.



Charles Hendry, former UK Trade Envoy for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and former UK Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change highlighted the nonconventional ways which countries have started to conduct hybrid warfare. “If you look at the extent to which we monitor the integrity and safety of subsea cables and subsea pipelines, then we are way short of where we need to be in this current new set of circumstances,” Hendry noted. Speaking on the role of natural gas in UK and European energy security, Hendry said: “I think we (UK) will inevitably be drawn away from an absolute net-zero commitment toward something more flexible, with a clearer, enduring role for gas in the mix.”



Dr. Joanna Depledge, Research Fellow at the Cambridge Centre for Environment, picked up on the importance of reducing energy costs and building energy resilience in the region. Dr. Depledge spoke on the results of COP30, arguing that “Belém was certainly not a failure, but it was disappointing for many hoping for faster decarbonization.” Regarding the region’s engagement in multilateral climate negotiations, Dr. Depledge said: “Over the past 10-15 years, I have seen a significant increase in commitment, engagement, and visibility from the region. Most countries in the region have submitted their transparency reports on time—a major achievement and the core of the Paris Agreement’s accountability system.” Dr. Depledge also praised the regional engagement in the recent and upcoming COPs: “COP31 in Antalya caps an extraordinary series of COPs in the region—Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Armenia hosting major climate and biodiversity conferences.”



Picking up on the topic of environmental pressures in the Caspian region, **Kakajan Berdiyev**, Co-Founder and Managing Partner at Maslahatcylar Consulting Firm, said: "The Caspian region—especially Central Asia—has felt climate stress more than any region globally over the past years. The region's temperature has increased at more than twice the global average, and it faces very high levels of water stress." In this regard, Berdiyev noted that water-related regional cooperation has become the number one priority in the C5 agenda. Berdiyev then commented on the growth of regionalism: "In every country I visit, I see a growing trend of regionalism and multilateral engagement. Whether in fossil fuels, renewables, or connectivity, the region is increasingly working together and engaging with global partners."

David Moran, CPC's UK advisor, gave concluding remarks and mentioned the U.K.'s strategic importance for the further development and strengthening of the Caspian region.

"I'm struck by how much more regional cooperation is taking place as the transition toward green energy accelerates. The transition remains complex, costly, and lengthy—it's not a done deal by any means. Navigating new realities isn't about saying 'we can't do it'; it's about understanding the risks but also the opportunities," Moran concluded.

You can read the full press release and access the event footage [here](#).



Turkic World – West: Geopolitical Dialogue – Budapest, Hungary



On December 9, Danube Institute in Budapest, Hungary, hosted the opening of the discussion platform “Turkic World – West: Geopolitical Dialogue.” The conference focused on the theme “*Natural Economic Allies: Forging Turkic-Western Economic Cooperation*.” The new platform aims to explore opportunities for deepening economic and political partnerships between the Turkic states, the European Union, and the United States of America. The conference was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, government agencies, foreign and local think tanks, analytical centers, as well as expert communities.



Source: [Hungarian Conservative](#)

Chairman of the CPC Board Amb. (ret.) **Richard Hoagland** and Senior Fellow **Dr. Eric Rudenshield** participated in the conference. Ambassador Hoagland and Dr. Rudenshield delivered keynote remarks in the panels titled “Paving the Future of the US-Turkic Silk Road Cooperation” and “Diversifying Critical Mineral Supply Chains,” respectively.

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